



Minutes of the State Board of Health

October 12, 2011

Cherberg Building, Senate Hearing Room 3, Olympia, Washington

SBOH members present:

The Honorable John Austin, PhD, Chair
Keith Grellner
Maria Hernandez-Peck, PhD
Stephen Kutz
Patricia Ortiz, MD

Secretary Mary C. Selecky
James Sledge, DDS
Karen VanDusen
The Honorable Donna Wright
Diana T. Yu, MD, MSPH

SBOH members absent:

State Board of Health Staff present:

Craig McLaughlin, Executive Director
Desiree Robinson, Executive Assistant
Christy Curwick, Health Policy Analyst
Yris Lance, Community Relations Liaison

Ned Therien, Health Policy Analyst
Tara Wolff, Health Policy Analyst
Lilia Lopez, Assistant Attorney General

Guests and Other Participants:

Audrey Adams, Washington Action for Safe Water
Ann Clifton, Mercury Awareness Team of Washington
Michelle Davis, Department of Health
David John, MD, Washington Action for Safe Water
Lonnie Johns-Brown, American Indian Health Commission
Alli Larkin, Washington Action for Safe Water
Jason McGill, Governor's office
Bill Osmunson, DDS, Washington Action for Safe Water

John Austin, SBOH Chair, called the public meeting to order at 1:16 p.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file).

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Approve October 12, 2011 agenda

Motion/Second: VanDusen/Sledge. Approved unanimously

2. ADOPTION OF JUNE 8, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

Motion: Approve the June 8, 2011 minutes

Motion/Second: Yu/Grellner. Approved unanimously

3. INTRODUCTION OF THE INCOMING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chair Austin explained that at the last Board meeting, members met in executive session to interview candidates for the executive director position. The members made recommendations and

directed him to make a final decision on selecting a new executive director. He introduced Michelle Davis as the Board's incoming Executive Director and described her background. Additional information is available in material behind Tab 03 of the Board's packet. Ms. Davis thanked the Board for the opportunity. Ms. Davis also thanked Mary Selecky, Secretary of the Department of Health, for her support over the years in her outgoing position as the Department's Assistant Policy Director.

4. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATE

Mary C. Selecky, Secretary of Health & SBOH Member, introduced Jason McGill from the Governor's office in the audience. She thanked Ms. Davis for her years of service to the Department of Health and said she looked forward to working with her in her new role with the Board.

Secretary Selecky reported on a recall of oysters harvested from a small area in Washington last month that resulted in some misunderstanding with China's import officials. The Department has since reopened the shellfish growing area. She reported on an unusually high number of cases of whooping cough in the state. She encouraged adults to get booster shots to protect infants from the disease. She reported on some good news about immunization rates increasing in Washington. She described a situation of a dead bat being found by customers on a shelf in a store in Thurston County. Diana Yu, SBOH Member, further explained that a few customers were potentially exposed to laboratory confirmed rabies from touching the bat. She said the laboratory confirmation came from the State Public Health Laboratory in about five days, longer than the normal 24 hours because of a three-day holiday. This was in plenty of time for the people to start immunizations against getting rabies. Secretary Selecky said this year has been a busy one for the State Public Health Laboratory regarding testing bats for rabies.

Secretary Selecky reported the Department of Health participated in beta testing a public health agency accreditation program, which is a quality improvement tool. She said about 80% of the national accreditation standards are based on those developed by state and local health agencies in Washington over the past ten years. She expects the Department of Health will be part of the first group of agencies actually reviewed for accreditation. She said 19 of the local health agencies in the state are interested in becoming accredited through this national program.

Secretary Selecky said the Washington State Public Health Association's Joint Conference on Health will be held the first part of next week in Vancouver. The local health officers will meet this Sunday. Approximately 300 people will attend and there will be a lot of discussion about agencies working together to protect public health. The Governor has asked cabinet members to identify three priority areas to focus on as agencies prepare to transition to a new Governor. The Secretary will be focusing on healthy communities; patient safety; and Puget Sound, "the jewel of the Northwest." She also will be attending the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials' meeting in Portland, Oregon. Heidi Avery, Deputy Homeland Security Adviser, is on the agenda. Secretary Selecky looks forward to talking with Ms. Avery about public health preparedness.

Secretary Selecky said that funding for the Tobacco Quitline ended on June 30 for under and uninsured persons. It continues for people covered under certain health insurance plans and Medicaid. The Department's slimmed down program will continue with other work, including compliance checks and a smoke-free housing initiative. The Governor has authorized her to ask the Legislature to allow the money remaining in the tobacco account to be used to fund the Quitline for the general public as long as the money lasts.

Secretary Selecky reported the Department of Health, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Makah Tribe, and Chehalis Tribe have each been awarded a federal community transformation grant. These are four out of only 61 grants awarded across the country. These grants must be used in rural areas to work on issues that produce healthy communities.

5. DISCUSSION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRANSITION PLAN

Craig McLaughlin, Board Executive Director, explained he will be replaced by Michelle Davis on October 17 and he will shift to a part-time consulting role during the transition, until the end of November. He will assist with staff performance evaluations, wrap up some tasks, and archive and close out his files. Additional explanation of the transition plan can be found behind Tab 05 in the Board's packet. Ms. Davis will be meeting with each of the staff members and Chair Austin next week. She would like to meet with each of the Board members personally shortly after beginning her new duties and will contact them to arrange convenient meeting times and locations.

6. STATEMENT OF THE BOARD ON POSSIBLE 2012 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, INITIAL DISCUSSION

Mr. McLaughlin, Board Executive Director, described the typical process the Board uses to provide direction to staff on expressing the Board's interests for the upcoming legislative session. He pointed out documents in the Board's packet behind Tab 06. He requested input from the members to develop a sense of the Board document for the 2012 session. The Board will be presented the proposal at its January meeting to consider adoption. Member Yu commented she would be interested in legislation about health care financing related to public health. She said health and safety issues for older persons are of particular interest to the Board's Health Promotion Committee.

7. PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Chair Austin read from a prepared statement about testifying to the Board (on file).

Ann Clifton, Mercury Awareness Team of Washington, testified about concerns with mercury in vaccines and the rise in autism. She expressed concerns about a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision protecting vaccine manufacturers from liability, and federal law that limits lawsuits to the federal vaccine court. She expressed concern about mercury (thimerosal) in vaccines, and infants receiving too many vaccinations when very young. She recommended infant vaccinations be delayed as much as possible until children are over two years of age. She provided handouts of additional information to members.

Audrey Adams, Washington Action for Safe Water, said she has testified before. She said her autistic son was damaged by vaccines and is sensitive to fluoride. She recommended the Board read a book: "The Case Against Fluoride" by Dr. Paul Connett. She said she would like to provide a copy of the book to all Board members, but could not afford to do so. Instead, she provided copies (with permission of the author) of a documentary video called "Professional Perspectives on Water Fluoridation" from the Fluoride Action Network for each Board member as part of her testimony.

Alli Larkin, Washington Action for Safe Water, expressed concern about the Board denying petitions for rule making from Dr. Osmunson about fluoride in drinking water. She said fluoride is added to water for the benefit of the phosphate fertilizer industry, which considers it a waste product otherwise difficult to get rid of. She indicated that corporate greed influences the practice of water fluoridation. She said fluoridation of water is not an efficient way to medicate people. Most of the fluoride ends up in the environment. She said many communities have stopped fluoridating

drinking water because it is expensive. She objects to water districts having the authority to medicate the public with fluoride without informed consent.

David John, MD, testified his review of research on fluoride, which indicates water fluoridation is not effective in reducing cavities. He described the work of Dr. John Calhoun of New Zealand and others that document increased fluorosis but no decrease in cavities from fluoridated water. He said water fluoridation is a fraud. He provided a handout for the Board.

William Osmunson, DDS, Washington Action for Safe Water, expressed frustration with the Board's denial of his petitions #14 and #15 about fluoride in water. He expressed particular concern about the Board's denial of petition #14 asking the Board to require a warning in water bills about the potential harm from fluoride for people with kidney disease. He said about half a million people in Washington have chronic kidney disease. He expressed concern that the Board has indicated it intends to "rubber stamp" an anticipated recommendation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on the optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water. He asked the Board to be skeptical about a recommendation from HHS. He said research shows that water fluoridation does not reduce the incidence of tooth decay. He expressed concern that the recommendation from HHS is being developed by dentists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention without sufficient review by other medical specialists.

The Board took a break at 2:35 p.m. and reconvened at 2:50 p.m.

8. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER BOARD BUSINESS

Mr. McLaughlin, Board Executive Director, described materials behind Tab 08 in the Board's Packet. For the first item, a proposed 2012 meeting schedule, he asked Board members to hold dates in eight months of the year for possible meetings. He did not ask the Board to approve the schedule, because meeting frequency will be determined by unresolved budget issues and Board business. He proposed the Board meet in person in June because of expected need for rule hearings. He asked the members to hold the date for the previously scheduled meeting in November this year, but did not foresee a need to meet at this time. He pointed out the Board's response letters to Dr. Osmunson's petitions for rule making #14 and #15. He mentioned there was no "FYI" newsletter in the Board's packet for recent months because the Board's communication consultant has been on medical leave. Other staff, particularly Desiree Robinson, has been filling in with other duties. He included an article from the October 5, 2011, edition of the Wall Street Journal reporting public health preparedness is being reduced by budget cuts.

Chair Austin read proposed resolution 11-01 to honor the service of Karen VanDusen to the Board. Keith Grellner, SBOH Vice Chair, mentioned that Ms. VanDusen was the first woman environmental health specialists in the state and one of the first modern environmental health specialists. Secretary Selecky said she was enthusiastically pleased when she heard Ms. VanDusen had applied for a position on the Board in 2005. Patricia Ortiz, SBOH Member, said she had five words to describe Ms. VanDusen: thoughtful, kind, exacting, inclusive, and dedicated. Other members said Ms. VanDusen was very welcoming, supportive of new Board members, and great to work with. Staff spoke appreciatively of Ms. VanDusen's hard work for the Board and her graciousness. Chair Austin recognized her attention to detail and compassion. Member VanDusen said she was thrilled when appointed to the Board and has enjoyed her time with it. She commented about coming from the "Happy Days" generation when things just seemed to keep getting better, but is dismayed at the current situation of reductions to core public health activities.

Motion: Adopt resolution 11-01.

Motion/Second: Yu/Sledge. Approved unanimously

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Member Ortiz commented about hearing on the radio today of an outbreak of cholera in Africa and its relationship to basic sanitation. It made her think of the basics of public health that people don't think about until it's gone. Member Yu commented about writing an article for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation about public health emergency response at the local level and its importance as a resource to the public even for events happening thousands of miles away (e.g. radiation scares or anthrax threats). She also commented on the importance of taking the time to train the public health leaders for the future. Donna Wright, SBOH Member, said her county was one of those seeing many cases of whooping cough. Chair Austin commended the Washington State Parks Department for beginning work to move sewage disposal from the floodplain of the Dosewallips River. He reported attending the National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH) conference in Northern Idaho in September. One of the things he learned about was the work in that area to mitigate the pollution from past silver and lead mining operations. He expressed concern that the pollution from the 20th Century will need to be managed forever into the future. He also mentioned that former Board chair Keith Higman, Island County Public Health Department Director, was awarded NALBOH's local health director of the year recognition at that conference. Member VanDusen made a motion to send a congratulatory note to Mr. Higman.

Motion: The Board Chair will send a congratulatory note on behalf of the Board to Keith Higman for receiving NALBOH's 2011 Recognition Award.

Motion/Second: VanDusen/Yu. Approved unanimously

10. STATE BUDGET UPDATE

Secretary Selecky reported that since February 2009, the state has adopted eight different budgets. Each one has reduced funding. Almost all states are having budget problems, especially those heavily relying on sales taxes. A few months ago, the Governor asked all state agencies to develop options for five and ten percent budget cuts in General Fund revenues. After the September revenue forecast, it was obvious the cuts would need to be at least ten percent (\$16 million for the Department of Health) and probably more. Secretary Selecky expects the Governor to evaluate the options for cuts by the end of October and develop a proposal for cuts of about two billion dollars for legislative consideration in the special session starting November 28. Local health agencies in the state have cut about 600 positions in the past three years. The Department of Health has suffered lower relative staff reductions because over half of the Department's budget comes from federal funding. Only about 15 percent of the Department's billion-dollar budget comes from the State General Fund. Over half of that is passed to local health agencies and other organizations. She is not recommending any cuts to the flexible dollars passed to local public health agencies. She believes the prevention programs are the most important to continue for public health. Secretary Selecky and Mr. McLaughlin said they did not expect the cuts finally taken by the Legislature to be ten percent across the board for all agencies. There could be even deeper cuts for the Department of Health and other health agencies. Mr. McLaughlin said the Board could cut ten percent from its current budget by maximum belt-tightening. Cuts above that would require reductions in current staffing. Refer to materials behind Tab 10 for summaries of health agency proposed budget cut options.

Member VanDusen asked Secretary Selecky to have her staff explain to Board members working on environmental health rule revisions how the cuts to the Department's funding will affect rule making process and difficulties with implementation.

11. STRATEGIC PLAN INTERIM UPDATES, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION

Mr. McLaughlin, Board Executive Director, explained the Board would normally be conducting strategic planning at this time. However, Chair Austin and he are proposing the Board delay a comprehensive update of the strategic plan. An interim update could provide staff guidance. Mr. McLaughlin lead the Board through suggested updates as described in a memo behind Tab 11 in the Board's packet. He recommended the Board adopt the memo as an adjunct to the existing plan.

Member Yu recommended adding a statement about promoting community health programs. She also recommended adding a statement about promoting safe and healthy environments, particularly for the elderly, maybe under Goal 5. Tara Wolff, SBOH Staff, said the Health Promotions Committee, as discussed earlier that day, intends to explore some of those issues. Stephen Kutz, SBOH Member, said it sounds like the proposals fit a blend of Goals 4 and 5. Member VanDusen recommended adding a statement about promoting immunization updates for adults, such as whooping cough. Secretary Selecky commented on the Governor's rule making moratorium and that she expects the Governor to extend the moratorium beyond the end of this year.

Mr. McLaughlin sought some clarification of whether the Board wanted to amend the memo of interim proposed updates to the strategic plan at this time or add such new statements later. The Board members decided to consider revisions beyond the memo in their packets at later meetings.

***Motion:** The Board approves the interim updates to the 2009-11 Five-Year Strategic Plan contained in the memo in its packet. It also agrees to consider additional updates at later meetings.*

***Motion/Second:** Yu/Kutz. Approved unanimously*

12. RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH BY CRAIG MCLAUGHLIN

John Austin, Board Chair read proposed resolution 11-02 to honor the service of Craig McLaughlin to the Board. Member Kutz said a person could be judged by the legacy they leave and the people they have mentored. Secretary Selecky commented on Mr. McLaughlin coming from outside the public health field and becoming committed to it. She hoped he would continue his commitment. Chair Austin said he spoke to former Board Chair Tom Locke, who could not be here today but wanted to express his appreciation for Mr. McLaughlin's work over many years. Chair Austin thanked Mr. McLaughlin for helping the transition of his departure go smoothly. Desiree Robinson, SBOH Executive Assistant, spoke passionately about how Mr. McLaughlin had supported her through some challenging times. Christy Curwick Hoff, Health Policy Analyst, expressed her appreciation for Mr. McLaughlin's supervisory style. Mr. McLaughlin thanked everyone for all the kind words. He commented about appreciating and learning from every member of the Board.

***Motion:** Adopt resolution 11-02.*

***Motion/Second:** VanDusen/Sledge. Approved unanimously*

ADJOURNMENT

John Austin, SBOH Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

John Austin, Chair